

# Intake at the Minnesota Department of Human Rights

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## What happens when I contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights with a complaint?

Intake is the first step in the process of filing a complaint with our agency. When you contact us with a complaint, an Intake officer will talk to you about your problem. Unfortunately, unfair treatment happens a lot, but we only have authority to look into discrimination that happens because of a “protected class” reason.

### There are 13 protected classes defined in the Minnesota Human Rights Act

- Race
- Color
- Creed
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Familial Status
- Disability
- Public Assistance
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Local Human Rights Commission Activity

### Intake questions

The Intake officer may ask you many questions. Your answers help us understand your situation. The Intake officer needs to know:

- when the unfair treatment happened and how many times it happened;
- why you think you have been treated unfairly;
- what reasons were given for the treatment you are complaining about;
- if the unfair treatment happened to you because you belong to a protected class.

## Do you have a case?

During the Intake process, our staff will look at the information about your problem to see if we have the authority to investigate your claim. Even if what happened to you was clearly unfair, we may not be able to help you with your complaint. The Minnesota Human Rights Act may not cover your problem.

You may have experienced discrimination, but we may decide not to investigate. This may be for many reasons, but here are two examples:

- There may not be enough proof that we can collect to justify more work on your case.
- The unfair treatment might not be serious enough to amount to what the law says is “discrimination.”

If we cannot do anything about your problem, we will try to send you to another agency that can help you.

## Investigation

If the Minnesota Human Rights Act covers your problem, and we decide to investigate your claim, we will start an investigation.

We look for facts that will show if what happened to you was “illegal discrimination.” The Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) is a neutral agency. This means we do not take sides, or try to “prove your case” for you.

## What happens next?

After your charge is filed, the “respondent”—person you say treated you unfairly—has to answer the charge. They write down what they think happened and give us papers we need to start the investigation.

You will get a copy of the respondent’s answer so you can tell us if you think the respondent’s explanation is not true.

We look at this information to decide if we need to investigate more.

We dismiss some cases at this point because it is not likely we will find the facts we need to show illegal discrimination happened.

Before investigation goes any further, we may offer you and the respondent a chance to settle your case through “mediation.” Many cases can be settled when the people involved sit down and talk about the problem with a neutral person or “mediator.” If your case cannot be settled this way, we will continue to investigate your case.

## How long does it take to investigate?

It can take up to a year from the date a charge is filed.

## We will decide your case

After we investigate your complaint, the Commissioner of Human Rights will decide whether or not discrimination probably happened. We call this a “probable cause” or “no probable cause” determination.

We write down our reasons for the decision about your case and send this to you with a letter explaining what happens next.

If “no probable cause” is found, we will not go any further with your case. You can ask us to reconsider this decision by following the directions in the letter for making an appeal.

If “probable cause” is found, we try to get a settlement for you that in some way pays you back or “compensates” you for the discriminatory treatment.

## What to do

If you think you are a victim of discrimination:

- Write down what happened to you if you think it was unfair.
- Write down the dates when the unfair treatment happened.
- Write down the names of other people that were there.
- Write down what the people who were there said.

## Do not wait!

Sometimes it is hard to say what is discrimination and what is not discrimination—every situation is different. But if you think you are a victim of discrimination, do not wait. Contact the Minnesota Department of Human Rights immediately. You have one year after the discrimination happened to file a complaint.

## How to Contact Us

### We take phone calls Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

Phone: 651-539-1100 (TTY 651-296-1283); Toll free: 1-800-657-3704

### You do not need an appointment to visit our office

We accept walk-ins from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

### **Our address**

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
Freeman Building  
625 Robert Street North  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

### **Email address**

info.MDHR@state.mn.us

*If you are emailing the department about filing a charge of discrimination and do not receive a reply within five business days, please contact our intake unit by phone at 651-539-1100. (TTY 651-296-1283) or Toll Free at 800-657-3704.*

### **Getting an interpreter**

If you need an interpreter to help communicate with our office, we will provide one for you free. We have staff members who speak Hmong and Spanish. Call us and say, “I need a (say your language here) interpreter.”

***This document is not a complete answer to Intake at the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.***